

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-1

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Beirut Bombing: Mystery Warriors Traced to Syria

This is the first of a series of reports on terrorism written and reported by Washington Post staff writers Bob Woodward, Richard Harwood and Christian Williams.

Three days before a bomb blast killed 241 American servicemen at the Beirut airport Oct. 23, a Lebanese financial emissary named Hassan Hamiz was given a check or voucher for approximately \$50,000 that could be cashed only at the Iranian embassies in Beirut or Damascus, according to reliable intelligence reports. The reports indicate that, after the bombing, it was cashed at the embassy in Damascus, where Hamiz, described as a "fixer" with high-level contacts, had very close relations with

Iranian Ambassador Ali Akbar Mohtashami, who has been identified by the CIA as a key figure in Middle East terrorism.

The \$50,000 payment is believed to be a primary link in the financing that set in motion two fanatical suicide truck-bomb attacks that destroyed the U.S. Marine emplacement and also killed 58 soldiers at the French military headquarters in Beirut that same October morning, according to a review of intelligence documents and interviews with officials in the United States, Middle East and Europe.

Investigations by the CIA and French, Israeli and Lebanese intelligence services have pieced together many of the essential

details of the devastation of Oct. 23, perpetrated by men who crave death as soldiers of their God and planned by others who rely on the terror factor as the most

effective brand of political warfare. The events that ended with the blood and rubble of that massive explosion included a complex series of transactions, codenames,

meetings in Beirut, the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon and Damascus, and trucks moving explosives under cover as rice transports.

In addition to Hamiz, 13 individuals now have been tied to the bombings by the intelligence services. They include a Syrian

THE TERROR FACTOR

Part I

intelligence colonel, a former PLO security officer, Syrian members of the Syrian-controlled Saiqa (Thunderbolt) Palestinian terrorist organization, a relative of the Shiite Moslem leader in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, an Islamic fundamentalist clergyman from Beirut and several veterans of other terrorist operations. Among them are:

- The Syrian intelligence officer, identified by various intelligence organizations

as Lt. Col. Diyab (also spelled Diab), has been traced to a planning meeting Oct. 21 or 22, just before the Marine bombing. Surveillance reports show that he was in the southern suburbs of Beirut and was planning an attack against French and American installations.

- A key architect of the operation, according to Israeli intelligence, is identified as Nablan Shaykh, a former deputy chief of national security for the Palestine Liberation Organization. He operated under the code name Abu Kifah and had been in charge of security in a west Beirut neighborhood at the Museum Crossing on the

line dividing Christian eastern and Moslem western Beirut.

- Two other Syrian officials in Saiqa, a PLO organization founded and controlled by the Syrian military, attended meetings on Oct. 21 and 22 and discussed a strike against the multinational forces in Beirut.

One Saiqa member, Ahmed Halaq, is identified in intelligence reports as a specialist in assassinations. He had been in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, a Syrian-controlled area about 30 miles east of Beirut

controlled Bekaa Valley, visited Beirut several days before Oct. 23 and was involved in obtaining the pickup trucks used in the bombing. According to intelligence reports, he heads what is called the Hussein Suicide Commandos, and intelligence reports say that immediately before or right after Oct. 23 he claimed he was going to report the outcome of the planned operations to his cousin Hussein Musawi, in the Bekaa Valley. Hamiz, the Lebanese financial emissary who cashed the \$50,000 check after the bombing, is also close to Hussein Musawi, the reports indicate.

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